



LIFELINK

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Reprogram Your Drinking Habits to Promote Health, Well-being and Safety

April brings several key areas of focus for the Navy to the forefront, and among those topics is alcohol awareness. Alcohol misuse can affect all aspects of our lives—from health and well-being, to social connections, physical and emotional safety, and mission readiness. As we mark the two-year anniversary of Navy's flagship responsible drinking campaign, *Keep What You've Earned*, here are a few suggestions to help you and your shipmates adopt or maintain healthy drinking habits and promote healthy decision making.

Don't rely on alcohol to reduce your stress. When encountering stress, if we're unable to respond adaptively while our bodies are in "fight or flight" mode, the likelihood that we'll make potentially unhealthy choices to ease that tension increases. Having a drink or two to unwind after a stressful day may seem harmless, but this habit is actually working against you and can lead to long-term physical and psychological health effects, including addictive or destructive behavior. Instead of immediately reaching for a drink, try turning to healthy habits. If you're more likely to make a "pit stop" on the way home from work, head to the gym instead. Endorphins released during exercise can actually improve your mood—a true happy hour! If trying to de-stress with alcohol has become a common practice for you, it's probably time to self-refer for assistance. Talk to your Drug and Alcohol Program Advisor (DAPA), chaplain, doctor, or command leadership about where to get help.

Empower yourself to thrive during adversity. To help you explore and identify your resources for making healthy decisions during stressful times, take a moment to fill out your *Stress Navigation Plan*, available on www.suicide.navy.mil. This simple proactive tool helps you think about your current practices for navigating stress while you're still emotionally and physically healthy. In the process, you may be able to identify more positive coping strategies than what you currently turn to, avoiding potentially destructive behavior like alcohol abuse.

Exercise controllability and plan ahead. As the winter weather is giving way to warmer temperatures, social calendars will start to fill with cookouts and parties. While you're making your party plans, make plans for a safe ride home your priority by ensuring that a shipmate, friend or family member will be your

designated driver. Designated drivers need to completely abstain from drinking—buzzed driving is drunk driving too. Programming the number to a local taxi service in your mobile phone is always a good backup plan. Controllability is one of the Principles of Resilience, helping you make proactive choices and minimize potential for stress or negative outcomes.

Be an active bystander. April also marks Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. Approximately half of all sexual assaults involve alcohol consumption by perpetrator, victim or both, according to the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Staying alert, engaged and looking out for your shipmates can not only prevent alcohol abuse, but can prevent sexual assault as well. If you recognize a potentially negative situation, you have the power to speak up and intervene before an incident occurs.

For more information on how you can encourage responsible drinking, visit www.nadap.navy.mil. For additional stress navigation tips to support every Sailor, every day, visit navstress.wordpress.com.



Check out the latest posters from the Keep What You've Earned campaign on nadap.navy.mil.



LifeLink Spotlight

Being there for *every Sailor, every day* is about actively engaging with your shipmates, keeping the lines of communication open so that they don't hesitate to speak out when things get difficult. The ability to recognize the sometimes subtle hints that a shipmate may be having trouble navigating life's challenges—or that they are considering suicide—is paramount to connecting them with the right support at the right time.

To that end, Navy Region Southwest (NRSW) is in the LifeLink Spotlight this month for their recent efforts aimed at maximizing educational opportunities for local Suicide Prevention Coordinators (SPC). NRSW recently began a pilot to have their entire SPC community trained in safeTALK—a course developed by LivingWorks to help participants connect the dots and recognize invitations for intervention when interacting with an at-risk person. This training not only helps participants increase their alertness, but is also an effective tool to help change and challenge personal perceptions regarding suicide, psychological health concerns and seeking help. Through role-playing scenarios and audio-visual learning, SPCs were better able to understand how difficult it can be to press through emotional challenges alone, and why it is so important to know how to communicate effectively to facilitate the recovery process.

One SPC, recalling that alcohol misuse or abuse can increase risk for self-harm, made a conscious decision to stop-drinking after participating in the training. Cmdr. Eric Johnson, NRSW Director of 21st Century Sailor Programs, is advocating holistic viewpoints such as these. He actively encourages NRSW SPCs to collaborate with other 21st Century Sailor Programs advocates—like command climate specialists, Drug and Alcohol Program Advisors, and Sexual Assault Victim Advocates—to ensure that wellness and prevention of destructive behaviors are addressed in an integrated manner.

To learn more about safeTALK and ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training), speak with your local chaplain or visit www.livingworks.net. To learn more about 21st Century Sailor Programs, click [here](#).



Resilience Corner

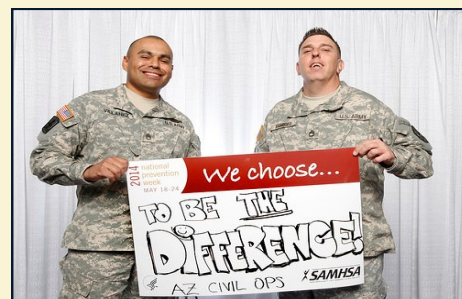
Looking Ahead: National Prevention Week and Mental Health Month

One of the best ways to reduce the barriers and negative perceptions that prevent people from seeking help to promote psychological health is to make it a part of everyday conversation. Our psychological, or mental, health is affected by every aspect of our physical health—and vice versa. Therefore, utilizing resources to promote mental health and prevent crises should be thought of no differently than taking action to prevent high-blood pressure or treating an injured limb.

Engaging in opportunities to educate your shipmates on comprehensive wellness by highlighting a particular topic influencing mental health each month, or highlighting several topics throughout the year, is critical to moving from awareness to action. May is the perfect month to reenergize your command's efforts to promote good mental health practices, and to brush up on the many factors that contribute to our mental and physical wellness—as well as those that detract from it. Each year, May is declared Mental Health Month and this year's theme is "B4Stage4," focusing on early identification and action. Mental Health America has several resources and tools to help you jumpstart your efforts, from key messages to sample proclamations, tweets and Facebook posts.

Also in May is the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Prevention Week, from the 18th to the 23rd. Daily health themes will

interrelate destructive behaviors and various health topics, ultimately focusing on prevention. Get your shipmates involved by taking the Prevention Pledge or inspiring others with a submission for the National Prevention Week "I Choose" Project.



Update your bookmarks: NavyNavStress has a new URL!

NavyNavStress, Navy Suicide Prevention Branch's official Operational Stress Control blog, has a new web address! Update your bookmarks to navstress.wordpress.com to continue accessing the tips and resources that help you, your shipmates and your family navigate stress. If you have already subscribed to receive automatic emails to alert you of new content, your subscription will not be affected by this URL change. However, you will no longer be able to access the blog by visiting NavyNavStress.com. Stay tuned for more resources to support every Sailor, every day!

News and Resources

The Countdown is on! Last Minute Tax Prep Stress Busters [NavyNavStress](#)

Send an E-card, Save a Life [Nat'l Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)

Military Suicides aren't Linked to Deployment, Study Finds [TIME](#)

Military OneSource Offers Confidential Video Non-Medical Counseling [Military OneSource](#)

Suicide and Middle-Aged Men [SAMHSA News](#)

How to Develop Healthy Sleep Habits [Real Warriors](#)

First Lady: Mental Illness Should Carry No Stigma [DoD News](#)

Suicide Safe: The Suicide Prevention App for Health Care Providers [SAMHSA](#)

For Better Relationships, Cool It! [HPRC](#)

'Why is Dad so Mad?' Veteran Writes Book to Explain his PTSD to his Daughter [NBC News](#)

Mind Over Mood: The Power of Positive Thinking [Real Warriors](#)

Navy Medicine Perspective: Moral Injury [Navy Medicine Live](#)

Upcoming Events

SPC Training Webinars

Apr. 21

May 13

[Register Here](#)

IRS Tax Deadline

April 15

Upcoming Professional Development Training for Chaplains

April 14-16 (Hawaii)

May 19-21 (Okinawa)

For more information, click [here](#)

Helping Your Military Child Navigate Stress

It's often said that military children serve right alongside their parents. They endure many of the same transitions: navigating separation during deployment (or geobachelor tours), adapting to life when that parent leaves and returns home, frequent moves, adjusting to new surroundings, and more. Though they tend to keep a smile on our faces and often help positively shape others' perspectives, sometimes it's difficult to determine how children are processing the latest changes in their lives—even the familiar ones (like moving!). The presence of protective factors can help lessen the negative effects of stress on children and families alike, building family resilience. Help your kids and family apply the Principles of Resilience (Predictability, Controllability, Relationships, Trust and Meaning) to thrive through transition periods with these quick tips:

Connect with the community

(Relationships). Helping your kids get involved in social and extracurricular activities will lessen the stress of making new friends and getting acclimated with a new place, providing a positive environment for expression. Social activities and peer connections can also be confidence builders. Military kids are often admired by their peers for their adaptability, sacrifice, and the "cool places" they've lived. A sense of belongingness is important!

Explore their feelings (Predictability, Controllability, Trust). There are a lot of unknowns with deployments and PCS

moves alike. Sit down with your children and explore their apprehensions. Making a plan for communication when a parent will be in a different location, teaching them about their new community and having open discussions can help kids regain a sense of control and promote trust. Get them excited about their upcoming changes while letting them know what to expect. They're more likely to adjust better to their new phase of life, and you'll have more peace of mind.

Set an example (Meaning). Kids look up to their parents in challenging times, but that doesn't mean you have to be superhuman! It's important to show children that life's changes bring new opportunities and that setbacks are only temporary. Help them see the positives, while trying to remain level-headed. Lean on the support of friends and family, faith or laughter as medicine for stress relief. This will help your children learn positive ways to navigate stress and find greater meaning in life's twists and turns.

Most importantly, remind your kids that you admire their strength. Thank them and tell them you love them often. Whether facing a change or navigating daily life, nurturing and affection are important protective factors at all times. Building resilience and navigating stress is a family effort!

For resources to help your family navigate challenges, visit [Military OneSource](#).

Real Warriors Campaign: "5 Tips to Stay Mission Ready"

In the military, the mission depends on the people who serve and sacrifice for our country. To help service members stay on target, the Real Warriors Campaign has recently launched a new infographic, "5 Tips to Stay Mission Ready." The infographic includes tips on stress navigation, time management, physical readiness, avoiding alcohol and substance misuse and identifying people you can turn to. The graphic is available for download and print by visiting the [Real Warriors Campaign Materials](#) page, or by clicking [here](#).

Navy Suicide Prevention Branch is a proud partner of the Real Warriors Campaign.

